
THE BOOK OF ESTHER.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

THE book of Esther is as singular a record as any in the Bible.

That it hath been received into the canon of scripture, and accepted as part of the inspired writings, is sufficient to confirm its divine authority; at least that part which is contained in the ten chapters inserted in this book. What follows as the supposed continuance of the history in the book called the *Apocrypha*, is altogether so questionable, that the Jews never received it into the canon of their scripture.

The book itself contains an interesting memoir of that part of the Jewish history which belongs to the children of the captivity which remained in Babylon, and fell under the Persian government, who did not return to Jerusalem with the captives which returned, when permitted so to do in the reign of *Cyrus*, king of *Persia*.

It is not certain who was the penman of it, though from a passage in one of the chapters (ix. 20.) it should seem that *Mordecai* committed it to writing. Certain it is, that he was well qualified for the office.

The subject is the danger to which that part of God's church was exposed from the hatred of her enemies; and the Lord's watchful care over his people in the wonders of his providence. Some few leading characters here and there interspersed, seem to point to the Lord Jesus; and which the reader will do well to be very diligent in looking after.

The period of time to which this book refers is not very clearly ascertained. That it was a considerable space after the first return of the children of the captivity is certain, for *Cyrus* was then king, and *Darius* followed. And the first year of the reign of *Cyrus* was about 536 years before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whereas this could not have been less than twenty years after. Some indeed have dated it nearly 70 years after.

I only here, as in all former instances, request the Reader to begin the perusal of it in prayer, that he may find sufficient cause to end it in praise. *All scripture* (the apostle saith) *is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

CHAP. I.

CONTENTS.

This book opens with the history of a great feast made by the king of Persia to his high lords and captains. The queen being sent for to the banquet, refuseth to come.

NOW it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces):

It is not very material to enquire, and especially as the Holy Ghost hath not shewn, who this Ahasuerus was. It is more than probable it is the same with Artaxerxes, Ezra iv. 6, 7.—But in respect to the extent of his empire, I think it more important to remark that it must have been a most extensive one. It was much larger than the one Daniel speaks of, Dan. vi. 1. But Reader! think what a dominion is that of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is from *sea to sea, and from the river even unto the ends of the earth*. Think also, amidst all the greatness of Ahasuerus, how short and transient his reign was. Whereas Jesus reigneth for ever, and of his duration and kingdom there shall be no end. Hail, thou glorious, thou almighty, thou universal and eternal monarch! Psm. lxxii. 8, 17—19.

2 *That* in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which *was* in Shushan the palace,

3 In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, *being* before him:

4 When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, *even* an hundred and fourscore days.

5 And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace;

6 *Where were* white, green, and blue, *hangings*, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds *were* of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble.

7 And they gave *them* drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another); and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king.

8 And the drinking *was* according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure.

9 Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women *in* the royal house which *belonged* to king Ahasuerus.

Reader! what a pitiful feast is this after all! to what good but waste. To what purpose but gluttony. To what intention but to feed our corrupt passions, lust and vanity. But turn your thoughts to Jesus. He hath made a feast indeed to all his princes and servants. *A feast of fat things*; and where he himself is both the Lord of it, and the whole of the banquet. Ahasuerus's feast was held for his princes and his nobles: But Jesus hath made a feast to all people; Isaiah xxv. 6. Ahasuerus's feast lasted for 184 days: Jesus's feast for ever. Ahasuerus shewed the riches of his kingdom: Jesus hath not only shewed his people his glory, but made them partakers of it, and causeth them to sit down with him in his kingdom. Oh! for grace to adore the sovereign Redeemer as the king in Zion, and the Lord both of heaven and earth,

10 ¶ On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,

11 To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she *was* fair to look on.

12 But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by *his* chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.

13 ¶ Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so *was* the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment:

14 And the next unto him *was* Carshena, She-

thar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, *and* Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, *and* which sat first in the kingdom;)

15 What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains?

16 And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that *are* in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus.

17 For *this* deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not.

18 *Likewise* shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus *shall there arise* too much contempt and wrath.

19 If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, that Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she.

20 And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small.

21 And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan:

22 For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writ-

ing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that *it* should be published according to the language of every people.

We have here the relation of the sad effects of feasting and drunkenness, which for the most part end in broils and contentions, and sometimes even in bloodshed and murder. Reader! recollect in your own knowledge whether you cannot call to mind evils resulting from intemperance. Indeed it can produce no good. The pampering our corrupt appetites, and feeding more than nature requires for sustenance, is at all times pernicious. Here we have an antient history of a divorce between Ahasuerus and his queen. And in more modern times what horrible consequences have ensued in public bodies, and in private life, from the excess of sensuality. Reader! depend upon it the happiness of man, even in relation to this life only, must consist *in crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts*.

REFLECTIONS.

MY soul! let some of the improvements this scripture furnisheth lead thee to contemplate the sad state of man by the fall? What do we read of this great king and his vast empire of good. What hungry bellies did he fill; what poor did he nourish: and what misery did he relieve? Not a word of these royal acts. How would his name have been handed down to posterity had some sweet records like these have been given to us. And yet infinitely higher, and more illustrious, had his reverence and love of God been recorded. Could it have been said that his court and people, led by his example, were pious towards God, and gracious towards men? Instead of this, we hear of nothing concerning him but feasting and lust, pride and passion.

From such a prince let us turn to one who was, and is, the reverse. Yes! blessed Jesus, thou art the prince of the kings of the earth; and both in empire, in love, and power, and grace, and goodness, all thy people can desire. Under thy reign every thing is formed for real splendour, real happiness and joy. Thou causest them that love thee to inherit substance, yea durable riches, and righteousness. Thou makest a feast indeed, a gracious, spiritual feast, and art thyself the food thereof. And thy feast is to lead thy people into green pastures, and feed them beside the still waters of comfort. And by and by thou wilt bring them all home to thine everlasting mansions of light, and joy, and happiness above, where thou wilt lead them *to fountains of living waters, and where thou wilt wipe away all tears from all eyes*.

CHAP. II.

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This chapter is a continuation of the history resulting from the former. Vashti the queen being deposed, Esther, a Jewish girl, is chosen. Mordecai her relation is enabled to make discovery of a treason meditated against the king.

AFTER these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.

2 Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king:

3 And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of the kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given *them*:

4 And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.

The most interesting remark, as it strikes me upon what is here said, is, to observe into what a degraded state our poor nature is fallen, when that which ariseth from the fall of our nature is made a pretence to the indulging of it. The union of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, the apostle tells us, was a mystery, intimating the resemblance between *Christ and his church*. But when the devil corrupted our nature to separate from God, the chastity of man's attachment to his partner was corrupted also. Ephes. v. 25—33.

5 *Now* in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite;

6 Who had been carried away from Jerusalem, with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

Most likely the whole cause for which the history of this transaction in the Persian court is recorded in the scriptures of God, is only to introduce certain great events belonging to the church. So that in fact the principal part of the history begins at this place. The Reader, therefore, will not fail to keep this as the grand point in view through the whole. And let him further observe, by what slender means the Lord is pleased to carry on his great designs concerning his church and people. When Jesus, our adorable Redeemer, came upon earth, in what an humble way and manner was he introduced. Who should have

thought such vast and glorious designs as redemption hath produced, should have opened with so low a beginning?

7 And he brought up Hadassah, that *is*, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid *was* fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.

Though Esther makes in the after-part of this history so considerable a figure, yet her introduction is but humble.

8 So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.

9 And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, *which were meet* to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best *place* of the house of the women.

10 Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew *it*.

11 And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.

12 Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, for so were the days of their purification accomplished, *to wit*, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with *other* things for the purifying of the women;)

13 Then thus came *every* maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house.

14 In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.

15 ¶ Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.

16 So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which *is* the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

17 And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

18 Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king.

19 And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat at the king's gate.

20 Esther had not *yet* shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.

I do not think it necessary to interrupt the progress of this history through these verses with any remarks. The relation given of the events is in a beautiful style of simplicity. Esther is represented in a most amiable light, and with a mind, suited as it should seem, for any nation. We may and we ought indeed, to observe, in the wonderful transition of circumstances, from the condition of a poor Jewish orphan, apparently friendless, and unconnected with any that seemed likely to

promote her advance in the world to that of the throne of Persia, what great events the Lord in his providence is pleased to accomplish, and it should direct our minds to look up, and contemplate a divine hand in every event. But Reader! I can tell you of a still more marvellous instance of Almighty power, namely, when a poor friendless sinner is taken from the prison and the tyranny of Satan, and regenerated by the Holy Ghost, betrothed to Jesus, and made a child of God by adoption and by grace.

21 In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

22 And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told *it* unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king *thereof* in Mordecai's name.

23 And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.

I request the Reader not to lose sight of this transaction, particularly the part that Mordecai had in it; for it became a point of great importance in the sequel of Mordecai's life. This small event, as it should seem to have been respecting Mordecai, the Lord graciously overruled, when a deep and desperate attempt was made against the church in the after stages of cruelty intended to be exercised upon it, and by it accomplished the church's deliverance. By small means sometimes the Lord carrieth on the secret purposes of his holy will. It is beautiful to mark how the Lord doth this in all our own concerns. The Psalmist saith, that *whoso is wise will ponder these things, they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.* Psm. cvii. 43.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! let the view here afforded of the sad corruption and base lusts of our poor fallen nature, add one conviction more to all thou hast already received of the great necessity and immense blessing of the pure gospel of Christ. Well might the angels call it *glad tidings of great joy, which should be to all people.* For what tidings more glad, or what joy greater, than to tell a poor sinner, who feels a body of sin and death, of uncleanness and inordinate affection, that *there is a fountain open to him for sin and uncleanness*; that there is *a spirit to mortify the deeds of the body, by which he may live.* Oh! the unspeakable mercy folded up in this proclamation of *liberty to poor captives.* Captives to sin, to Satan, to divers lusts and pleasures, to the effect of anger, malice, hatred, variance, and all the works of the flesh. Yes! precious Jesus, thou hast brought deliverance in thy gospel from the vile passions of our nature in

this life; and by thy great salvation deliverance from the wrath to come. Oh! Lord deliver me from myself, from my own corrupt nature; from a body of corruption under which I yet groan. Make me holy as thou art holy, and never, dearest Lord, suffer me upon any occasion, or from any cause, to be making *provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof?*

Reader! when you have gathered this instruction from the view of the ungoverned lusts of men, as read to us in this chapter; turn your thoughts and gather another sweet instruction, from the overruling providence of God, as sweetly taught us in this history in making the very corrupt passions of men, minister to his glory. Never doth the Lord manifest more strikingly his sovereignty and grace, than when he compels the very passions of bad men, to promote the sacred purposes of his holy will. The church of God was about to be brought into danger. How shall the Lord, without openly displaying his interposition, preserve it? Why thus. Ahasuerus turning off his queen Vashti to gratify his anger, shall be influenced to the choice of Esther, to supply her place. And Esther, unknown to him, being of the children of the captivity, shall be brought forward as the Lord's instrument, to the preservation of his people. Neither is this all. For as a secondary aid to the accomplishment of this purpose, Mordecai shall be brought acquainted with a plot laid against the king's life, a record shall be made of his loyalty, which shall not immediately be rewarded, but brought forth in due season. Oh! how beautiful is it, to watch the ways and works of our wonder-working God. Justly is it said, *that his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known.* Reader! make application of this blessed doctrine to your own person and circumstances, and depend upon it you will find continual opportunity, of proving the same thing. *The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.*

CHAP. III.

CONTENTS.

We have here the church of God brought into great danger, and threatened with total destruction. Haman the Agagite is advanced by the king to great honors; being slighted by Mordecai he determineth revenge upon the whole nation of Israel.

AFTER these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that *were* with him.

The Reader should recollect, for the better apprehension of this history, that at this time the kingdom of Persia, as the Roman in after ages, and the Babylonian in former times, swayed the sceptre of the then known world. This Haman therefore, it is probable, had been brought under the government of Persia, and being at court had gained the favour of Ahasuerus.

2 And all the king's servants, that *were* in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did *him* reverence.

3 Then the king's servants, which *were* in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?

4 Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew.

At the first reading of this passage, it may seem somewhat extraordinary to a common Reader, that Mordecai should refuse to pay homage to Haman. But the reason will soon be discovered, when we call to mind what God had commanded his people on this point. Haman, we are told, was an Agagite; a descendant, therefore, of that Agag, who was king of the Amalekites; against whom the Lord had sworn, that his people should have *war, from generation to generation*. Hence, therefore, Mordecai considered the Lord's command, and refused to bow down to an Amalekite: so that nothing can be more beautiful in proof of Mordecai's faithfulness. Though his life was at stake, and he knew that the absolute power of the king might order him to death without trial; yet he feared not the wrath of the king, like another champion for the truth of old, for *he endured, as seeing him who is invisible*. Exod. xvii. 14—16. Deut. xxv. 17—19. 1 Sam. xv. 2, 3. 32, 33. Heb. xi. 7.

5 And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

6 And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that *were* throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, *even* the people of Mordecai.

Mark the true Amalekitish spirit in this monster of iniquity. Suppose that Mordecai was ever so deserving of death, was it not enough, Haman, to cut him off; but thou must destroy a whole nation with him? Alas! what a desperate height the bad passions of bad men are capable of advancing to. But, Reader! may we not spiritualize the passage, and behold in it (like Pharaoh in Egypt) the hatred of the world against the church of Jesus. It was the enemy of souls which caused this hellish design to take flame in the breast of Haman. And at the bottom of this intended destruction, it was Jesus, and his church and people, which the

Devil aimed at one blow to destroy. Oh! how precious it is, to behold the Lord's watchful eye over his people. *Destroy it not*, (saith He that looketh on) *there is a blessing in it*. Yes! Jesus is in it, and it cannot be hurt. Isaiah lxxv. 8.

7 In the first month, that *is*, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that *is*, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, *to* the twelfth month, that *is*, the month Adar.

It should seem, that what is here said concerning the casting of the lot, means as if Haman was using some art or contrivance, by way of better forwarding his malicious designs. One thing, however, seems clear from it, that as the lot did not turn up until the *twelfth* month, it gave a longer time for the Lord's purposes, concerning the delivery of his people, to ripen. Solomon tells us, *that the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord*. Prov. xvi. 33. No doubt, while these diabolical designs of Haman were contriving, the Lord's people were sharply exercised. And, no doubt, great opportunity was afforded for prayer. Reader! the delay of judgments and of mercies may be all sanctified, when they lead us the oftener to the throne of grace.

8 And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws *are* diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it *is* not for the king's profit to suffer them.

9 If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring *it* into the king's treasuries.

Now the policy of hell begins to work. Never, surely, was there a deeper scheme of revenge formed. Oh! how well it is for us that the Lord looks on. Reader! what a relief is it to the mind, when at any time iniquity abounds, to remark the tender, watchful love of Jesus over his church. His message to the church of *Smyrna* is an example of this kind, never to be forgotten. *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*. Rev. ii. 10. How sweet and consolatory are these words. The devil, like Haman, would have cast them *all*; but the Lord saith, it should only be *some* of them. And he would have cast them into *hell*; but no, saith Jesus, it shall be but in *prison*. And he would have kept them there *for ever*; but it shall be

only *ten days*. Oh! how sure is the crown, when Jesus hath purchased it.

10 And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy.

11 And the king said unto Haman, The silver *is* given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.

Was there ever so foolish, as well as worthless, a monarch, as this poor unthinking Persian, to consent to an act so cruel. Reader! remark it, wherever the gratification of corrupt lusts reign in the body, the mind will be also under the dominion of cruelty.

12 Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that *were* over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and *to* every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring.

13 And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, *even* upon the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which *is* the month Adar, and *to take* the spoil of them for a prey.

14 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day.

15 The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.

It is impossible to conceive the different effects, which must have been called forth in the different minds of the people, throughout the whole

empire, in consequence of this edict. What a mercy did the Lord manifest to his people in the midst, that the whole kingdom were to be apprized of it, before that the execution was to take place. So Jesus holds forth grace to his people, and even to the rebellious, a space for repentance. Having planned the ruin of the poor defenceless Jews, the king and Haman sit down to drunkenness. While God's people are afflicted the enemy shouts. Here let us wait awhile, and see how the Lord will work. In every trial these sweet words should comfort during the dark hour: *For the oppression of the poor, and the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord.* And when God ariseth, woe to the oppressor. Psm. xii. 5.

REFLECTIONS.

IF we anticipate the history of this memorable event, as the sacred writer hath in the subsequent chapters given it, we shall not only derive a most blessed lesson, how to wait the Lord's time in all trials for deliverance; but we shall learn also, how to possess our souls in patience during the dark hour. Never, perhaps, was there a more deadly blow aimed by any wretch, than this Agagite levelled at the poor Jews. And the sequel shews us that it fell wholly upon himself. Reader! depend upon it, such will be all the stratagems and schemes of Satan, in his various attacks upon Jesus and his Church. It is not enough to say that his designs shall do no harm; we must say more than this, and be convinced that they shall all do good. *For all things work together for good to them that love God.* Doth Satan plan my soul's destruction? doth he want to get me into his snare? doth he desire to have me, that he may sift me as wheat? Do I know these things? do I feel, at times, his power? Doth he join with my corruptions to cast me down? And doth a sense of this make me cry to the Lord? Doth it cause me to fly out of myself, and take refuge in Jesus! Surely then, the Lord overrules even the devices of the enemy to my soul's welfare. And I ought to rejoice, as the Holy Ghost, by his servant James, commanded the church, when *falling into divers temptations.* Here then, blessed Jesus, let my soul always rest on thee, and thy finished work of salvation, when at any time unpromising events and discouraging trials occur. Oh! for grace, at all times, to exercise faith on that sweet promise: *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.*

CHAP. IV.

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This chapter begins with the relation of the effect Haman's plan had upon the minds of the Jews. The great distress in which the whole were involved. An account is given to Esther. She conferreth by messages with Mordecai upon it. A fast is appointed by Esther, before she ventures into the king's presence.

WHEN Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sack-

cloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;

2 And came even before the king's gate: for none *might* enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

3 And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, *there was* great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

The subject riseth to a very interesting point at the opening of this chapter. Mordecai well knew that he was the cause which had called forth Haman's vengeance. He doth not recant however, or humbly seek peace with Haman. This would have been to have courted the favor of man, and slighted the confidence he had in God. It was God's cause in which he was embarked: and, no doubt, his eyes were to the Lord for deliverance. But until deliverance should be wrought, if it pleased the Lord to grant such a mercy, Mordecai gives vent to sorrow. It is certainly a beautiful feature in his character, that he came forth publicly, by this cry in the midst of the city, to shew that he was a Jew. But while viewing the subject in its first and literal sense as an history, we may, I think, without violence, as it concerns the church of God, behold it also spiritually. A proclamation of God's righteous law is gone forth against sin and transgression; for, void of deliverance by Jesus, universal and everlasting destruction is assuredly to fall, from the presence of our Lord, on all who know not God, and obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And while the awakened sinner is unacquainted with the means of escape in the redemption by Jesus, like Mordecai he will rent his cloaths and cry aloud with a great and bitter cry; *what must I do to be saved?*

4 So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told *it* her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved: and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received *it* not.

5 Then called Esther for Hatach, *one* of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what *it was*, and why *it was*.

6 So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the

street of the city, which *was* before the king's gate.

7 And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Hamán had promised to pay to the king's treasures for the Jews, to destroy them.

8 Also he gave him a copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew *it* unto Esther, and to declare *it* unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people.

9 And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

10 Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai;

11 All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, *there is* one law of his to put *him* to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.

12 And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.

The several conferences here, carried on by means of the chamberlain between Esther and Mordecai, serve to shew how much Esther took it to heart. But the Persian custom totally precluded the women of the king's chamber, to have any personal conversation, with any other than the chamberlains appointed by the king to attend them. This may serve to explain why it was, that Mordecai could not be permitted to see Esther in person. Even so critical a moment as this made no allowance. Reader! pause over this part of the history and consider the happiness of God's people. A throne of grace is always open to thee. Jesus not only is ready to receive his people, but he waits to be gracious. His hand is full of gifts, and his heart full of love, and grace is dropping like the honey-comb from his lips. And lest his people after all the many blessed things which are said of him, should still be backward to draw nigh; we are commanded to come boldly to a throne of grace in his blood, that we may obtain *mercy and find grace to help in all time of need*. Heb. iv. 16.

13 Then Mordecai commanded to answer Est-

her, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, *then* shall their enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?

Though I must not swell the observations on this history too largely, yet I must beg the Reader to remark with me several very striking traits of character, in this account of Mordecai. In the first place, what faithfulness he used with the queen; telling her she was a Jew, and most certainly as a Jew, she would, and must be, dealt with in the end by this desperately wicked enemy, Haman. In the next place, Mordecai's faith in God is eminently great upon this occasion. Whether Esther would or not stir herself in the perilous moment; yet the cause was God's, and deliverance would come. And thirdly, Mordecai gently intimates, that no doubt the Lord had advanced her to the throne purposely to be his instrument; but if she neglected it, her ruin, and the whole house of her fathers, would be the more abundantly aggravated. By these arguments the faithful Mordecai endeavoured to direct the eye of Esther to the Lord, under this pleasing confidence, that as the Lord had placed her where she was for his glory, he would help her through every difficulty, in the accomplishment of his own blessed designs for his people's deliverance. Reader! do not fail to make application of these most gracious thoughts of the faithful Jew, to thine own circumstances, and the circumstances of the church of Jesus in all ages, as they may be required. It is sweet, it is precious, to eye the hand of the Lord in all events. And it is equally so to trust God upon all occasions. The Holy One of Israel is engaged for his people's welfare, both by word, and by oath, and by the blood and righteousness of his dear Son. And he hath manifested his faithfulness, as all the saints have borne testimony under all trials. Why then, Reader, shall you or I be an exception to this everlasting care and love that Jehovah hath to his people? Oh! for faith to give God in Christ the credit of God, and to believe in him when matters are most dark and discouraging.

15 ¶ Then Esther bade *them* return Mordecai *this answer*,

16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

17 So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

How the Lord wrought upon the mind of Esther is evident from what is here said. She enters not upon the service to which she was called, without first looking up to the Lord both for a blessing and direction. Reader! she did as I pray God you and I may have the same grace to do upon all undertakings for God's glory, and our own happiness; she sought to God according to that blessed promise, which thousands have found true, and none ever failed in: *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths.* Prov. iii. 6. And it is a maxim sooner or later to be depended upon, he that begins in prayer will find cause to end in praise. I admire the piety of Esther. She was indeed a true Israelite in setting up a fast herself, and in calling upon the church to the same. Here was a sweet example of what is frequently spoken of, but not so generally regarded, the communion of Saints. Though Esther and the Jews of the city of *Shushan*, were separated by walls and absent in body, yet were they present in Spirit. And oh! what might we not expect to follow such spiritual converse among the people of God, when we call to mind that one and the same Almighty Spirit, is the quickener of all, the helper of the infirmities of all, and maketh *intercession for the saints according to the will of God.* Rom. viii. 26, 27. The resolution Esther took of going in uncalled before the king, was highly proper and noble. God in covenant is a sure God; and in all cases which are for his glory and his people's welfare, he will manifest himself their helper. But (as if Esther had said) if there be a doubt concerning this particular providence now pending, if the Lord hath given us up to chastisement, I can but perish; and if I do I will yet die trusting. Reader! while we admire this woman's faith, let you and I seek grace to exercise that faith yet higher. None can perish who hang on God's covenant engagements in Jesus. And therefore to say (as some do say,) if I perish, I will perish at Christ's feet, is a contradiction in itself, and plainly manifests that their faith who say so, is not what it should be. Oh! for faith to believe the record which God hath given of his Son. And in this faith to go in before the king of Kings, and lord of Lords, with a firmness of assurance like Job. *Will he plead against me (saith Job) with his great power? No. But he will put strength in me. There the righteous might dispute with him; so shall I be delivered for ever from my judge.* Job xxiii. 6, 7. Reader! pause, and admire the grace of faith given to this man. And while you admire, beg of God to be made a partaker of the same. Surely, the true believing soul in Jesus, if he gives credit to the word of Jehovah, or the infinitely precious value of the Redeemer's blood and righteousness, can never fear to perish, while secured in the double stronghold of God the Father's sovereign grace, and God the Son's justifying righteousness. Lord! grant in this faith my soul may daily, hourly live, and in this perfect assurance die. Amen.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! here is a large fund of rich things in this chapter, to call up thy most awakened contemplation. Mordecai, in the prospect of the destruction of his countrymen the Jews, covered himself with sackcloth, ran into the midst of the city, and uttered a loud and bitter cry, in token of the threatened miseries of the people. But if

you and I had but a deep sense of the threatened punishment of everlasting miseries, which are hanging over the heads of all *that hold the truth in unrighteousness*; could we but properly ascertain the sorrows of that tribulation, and wrath, which must assuredly one day light upon all the workers of iniquity; what bitter dolorous cries would issue from the heart, in the sad prospect of such dreadful, everlasting misery? But how little do the most awakened consider, as they ought these solemn things! God speaks once, yea twice, and man regards it not. Oh! Lord! take to thyself thy great power, and turn back the hearts of the people to seek thy face, before *the great and terrible day of the Lord shall come*.

Reader! think, if it be possible, of the vast difference between the court of Persia, and the court of heaven. See in the case of Esther the queen, how wretched that one so high in rank should yet be in danger of her life, if presuming to come into the king's presence uncalled. Whereas thou hast not only a court of heaven, and a throne of grace at all times to fly to; but one there who commands thee to come boldly, to find mercy and grace to help in all times of need. One, who makes thy cause his own. One, who is more interested for thy welfare than thou art for thyself. One, who hath loved thee and given himself for thee. Oh! precious, precious Jesus! to thee, Lord, would I come; not according to the law of my obedience, for I have nothing to plead of this kind; but in the law-fulfilling, and all-perfect righteousness of thy finished salvation. And oh! how sure and certain is my reception of grace and mercy from thee; since thou hast said; *All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me, and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out. My sheep shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.* Be thou everlastingly blessed, O my God and Saviour; and let a throne of grace witness for me, that in thee and thy salvation do I put my trust; *so shall I never be ashamed nor confounded world without end.*

CHAP. V.

CONTENTS.

We have here the prosecution of the history concerning Esther's going in before the king. She adorns herself in her royal apparel, and approacheth the king. He receives her graciously.

NOW it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on *her royal apparel*, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house.

2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, *that* she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that *was* in his hand. So

Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

Highly interesting as the account here is of Esther's appearing before the king, and anxious as we feel ourselves while prosecuting the history, until the event of her success is known; yet there is a subject which this tale naturally tends to awaken in the mind vastly more interesting, namely, of every poor sinner's appearing before God. Reader! hath not your own heart suggested the thought, and did not the relation of the state in the which Esther stood, lead your mind to consider how the sinner must one day stand, *before the judgment seat of Christ*. Precious Jesus! what unspeakable mercies hast thou bestowed upon thy people, in that their approach to God in thy blood and righteousness, is warranted, their acceptance insured, and the golden sceptre not only always held forth, but they are received as partakers of thy throne, and will one day sit down with thee in it, and be there for ever. Rev. iii. 21.

3 Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what *is* thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.

Reader! do not overlook the hand of the Lord in this business. It was God which disposed the king to be so gracious. *When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.*

4 And Esther answered, If *it seem* good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.

5 Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

There was a great deal of wisdom as well as modesty in this request. Such an opportunity as a banquet would afford, would better favour the petition she had further to present than immediately preferring it now. When highly favoured souls have the presence of the Lord Jesus, and, like the beloved apostle John, lie in Christ's bosom, they feel more confidence to tell Jesus all their secrets.

6 And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What *is* thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what *is* thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed.

7 Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request *is*;

8 If I have found favour in the sight of the

king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to-morrow as the king hath said.

It should seem that Haman had no consciousness that Esther was a Jew, for if he had it would have struck him, that Esther was implicated in the warrant of the king, for the general execution of all the Jews. Probably, the Lord overruled this to his more sure destruction. And I cannot but think, that the same gracious Lord overruled the mind of Esther, from some cause which she perhaps could not even to herself explain, why she postponed making known what her request was, the *first* day of the banquet. The opening of the next chapter informs us, that the same night, which was the night preceding the *second* banquet, the king's sleep departed from him, and by a providence he had no consciousness of, he was led to the perusal of the chronicles of his kingdom, where Mordecai's loyalty was brought to his recollection, in saving the king's life from a conspiracy, as mentioned in the second chapter. Hence, therefore, this became a great strengthening to promote the gracious designs of God, in the deliverance of his church and people from Haman's cruelty. Reader! nothing is more profitable than to watch even the smallest leadings of God's providences. The least token, the least word sometimes dropped, when it is to accomplish the designs of God, become the introduction to a train of the greatest events. Esther's postponing her request no doubt was productive of great mercy. Reader! do not fail to recollect, how enhanced the Lord's blessings frequently are by their delay. We are, like children, all in haste to gather the fruit, though unripe, and would be injurious. God keeps it till it is more suited for us, and our hearts more suited to receive it.

9 Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.

10 Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife.

11 And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all *the things* wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king.

12 Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto

the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to-morrow am I invited unto her also with the king.

13 Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

The sacred historian hath drawn the portrait of this man in a short compass to a full length painting, and of the most finished kind, in a description of misery. He confesses, in the midst of all the possessions the highest rank in the court of eastern magnificence could afford, that such dreadful malignity rankled within, that the whole was nothing, so long as he saw a poor Jew whom he envied, sit without doing him reverence in the king's gate. Reader! pause over this, and remark how wretched must be the state of a man's heart, which is open to such dreadful corroding passions! how little to be esteemed then must be all outward things, when a profusion of them cannot ensure happiness. And above all think, I charge you, how infinitely precious must be that blessed and only remedy, which the gospel of Jesus affords, for changing the heart, and curing such guilty passions.

14 Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made.

The subject is here wrought to the most finished point of every thing that is interesting; and every thing as far as human malice, aided by diabolical stratagems, could effect evil, seems hovering over the poor Jews. Thus the Lord frequently permits the malice of bad men, to go to the greatest length for the exercise of his people's faith, the greater disappointment and ruin of their foes, and the more illustrious display of his own glory. *Surely the wrath of man shall praise him, the remainder of wrath will he restrain.* Psm. lxxvi. 10.

REFLECTIONS.

WHO can read this history of Esther's going in before the king, full of fear, doubt, and a thousand misgivings; and not call to mind the state, in which many of God's people go in before Jesus their king and God in Zion! and who can behold the kindness and complacency with which the king received Esther, and not have his heart led out, to contemplate the everlasting love, and kindness, and favor, which the Lord Jesus sheweth to all his poor petitioners. Surely any of the Lord's redeemed ones have cause to blush, who keep back through fear from Jesus, when we here behold Esther going in unsent, uncalled, and contrary to the law, and yet finding favor; while every poor sinner that feels his need of Je-

sus is called, invited, nay even commanded to come, and the golden sceptre is always held out, and Jesus waits to be gracious. Reader! let this sweet view be productive of all its designed effects in our hearts. We have no uncertainty, no ifs or peradventures, respecting our reception. We have no Hamans to oppose us; for though Satan the adversary, is said to stand resisting, yet blessed be our God he is rebuked. But we have a sure, a successful, an all-prevailing advocate with the Father, who ever lives, both to plead, and to ensure our acceptance. Oh! for grace then to go always with holy boldness, not in slavish fear, nor in bondage frames, for this is highly unbecoming the redeemed of the Lord; but let us come, as those whom the Son of God hath made free, and in whom God our Father hath called us to the privilege and adoption of sons. Oh! how very delightful would all seasons, and especially holy ordinance seasons prove, if by faith in God's dear Son, the redeemed of the Lord would at all times draw nigh in the blood of the cross.

Reader! as Esther made a pause before she ventured to bring her petition too hastily to an issue; so let you and I, in all great events concerning the Lord's providences in the world. Though this chapter closeth with a dark and lowering aspect, yet it is in the Lord's hands. He is everlastingly pursuing the salvation of his people. *Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.* Leave all events with Jesus. Hast thou trusted him with thy soul; depend upon it he careth also for the body. Leave every concern in his hands. He doeth all things well. Remember that sweet scripture, *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth knowledge, shall keep the heart and mind in Christ Jesus.*

CHAP. VI.

CONTENTS.

The black cloud with which the church was covered, in the preceding chapter, begins in this to brighten up. Ahasuerus, unable to sleep, causeth the records of his kingdom to be read to him. This leads to Mordecai's advancement. Haman begins to meet with mortification. Esther's petition is presented.

ON that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.

I beg the Reader to mark the opening of this chapter. The king could not sleep. We need not stay to ask wherefore he could not: but rather behold the cause in the Lord. Scripture tells us, it is *the Lord that giveth his beloved sleep*. But when the Lord hath any providences to be accomplished, he never can want the means to bring them about; even his enemies shall be restless, if such a state can better minister to his glory. In this sleepless state, the king commands the chronicles of

his kingdom to be read to him. Reader! if you or I lay sleepless, let us read the book of God, or meditate in the night watches upon Jesus, and his great salvation. I beg the Reader to mark yet further, the particularity of the king's choice, in having the Chronicles of his kingdom read to him. In those eastern courts soft music was made use of, to lull the monarchs to sleep. Reading the events of his kingdom, was more likely to induce thought than to cause forgetfulness. Dan. vi. 18.

2 And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

Reader! go on to remark the hand of the Lord in what is here related. How came the persons who read to the king, to light upon this part of the Chronicles which referred to Mordecai? Surely he that made the king sleepless, caused the Readers of the Chronicles to turn to this chapter. Oh! how sweet is it, to see God's hand in all providences! and if possible how far sweeter, to trace the Lord's hand, in causing his servants the ministers to read such scriptures, and to preach such sermons as they themselves are perhaps unconscious of, but yet the Lord directs to the heart of sinners. *Surely* (saith the patriarch) *the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.* Gen. xxviii. 16.

3 And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him.

Reader! look still with your eye beyond the letter of the word, and discover one behind the whole, like the prophet's vision, (Ezek. i. 26) directing both the heart of the king and his servants. And oh! that God's exercised and afflicted people, might learn from the case of Mordecai, as related in this instance, that while he was waiting as he thought, the impending judgment, the Lord was hastening to him in mercy. Such is it with God's people at all times. *All these things* (Jacob said) *were against him.* But, in reality, they were all making for him. Gen. xlii. 36.

4 And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

Every verse in this sweet chapter is interesting. No sooner was the morning arrived, than Haman, alive to his malice, was already at court, waiting to see the king on the business for hanging Mordecai. Reader! think how malicious the devil is to accuse the brethren: think how Jesus rebukes him. Under all thy fears, recollect that there is One always on the throne, whose redemption is complete, and whose intercession never fails.

5 And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in.

Haman is announced. Ahasuerus is ready for his purpose, and Haman for his: but oh! how different their views. Think of this, my soul, when the enemy storms most. Never is the triumph of hell nearer the close, than when Satan grows most furious.

6 So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?

7 And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour,

8 Let the royal apparel be brought which the king *useth* to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head;

9 And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man *withal* whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

10 Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, *and* take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.

11 ¶ Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

Reader! When you have made all due reflections on the history, and beheld in it, with wonder, how the Lord overrules all things to his own glory, his people's good, and their enemies' ruin: and when you have made suitable application of it to your own case and circumstances, and the circumstances of God's church and people in all ages; then turn

your thoughts to Jesus, who, as the Glory-man, Jehovah, delighteth to honor. Oh! who can behold Jesus in the glories of his most gracious character, as the Head and King of his church and people, and not bend the knee before him, and with the whole soul confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father! Hail! thou King of kings, and Lord of lords!

12 And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered.

Reader! observe, and closely observe, the different effects wrought upon the minds of those two men. Mordecai was not elated: he did not hasten to the king after his promotion. He did not seek to get the decree, for the destruction of himself and people, reversed: neither did he seek to be revenged upon Haman. No, his cause was in good hands, the Lord's hands. *He that believeth shall not*, for he need not, *make haste*. On the other hand, Haman, stung to death, feels all that mortified pride can feel: but no grace of repentance, no sorrow, no compunction at the infamy of his conduct, only at his disappointment. And, Reader! can you desire stronger evidence than this affords, that there is, there must be, all this difference between grace and nature: Wherefore was the nature of Mordecai thus directed, but because grace had wrought it in him. And wherefore Haman still hastening to ruin, but from the malignity of his own mind.

13 And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every *thing* that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai *be* of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.

14 And while they *were* yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hastened to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared.

Observe, Reader! the ground on which the wife of Haman, and those around him, forebode evil. If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews; why, what were they? Captives, poor, tributaries, and in desolate circumstances. But they were a seed in covenant with God; though outcasts, yet God's outcasts. Isa. xviii. 4. And as a praying seed of Jacob, they had power with God to prevail. Reader! think only of the vast privileges of God's people. *If God be for us, who can be against us*. Haman is now hastening to the banquet, no doubt, as he thought, to repair all; but in reality to hasten on his final ruin. Pause, Reader, and contemplate the hand of God in all.

REFLECTIONS.

READER! while I pray for grace both for you and myself, that we may derive all suitable instruction from our gracious covenant God, as held forth to us in this chapter, manifesting himself in the deliverance of his people, and the ruin of his enemies, both as the God of providence and of grace, I would beg of you, with greater earnestness, to let what is said of Mordecai, and the honor put upon him, lead your mind to the contemplation of Jesus. Surely in the day, when from the gate, and from the prison, Jesus was exalted at God's right hand as a Prince and as a Saviour, and all principalities and powers made subject unto him, the exaltation of Jesus, as the glorious Head of his church, was then set forth; and as our adorable Redeemer and Saviour, Jehovah manifested that he delighted to honor him. And think how the Lord Jehovah hath indeed delighted to honor him. He hath not only given him a name which is above every name, but it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell. He hath not only made him the Saviour of poor sinners, but he hath made all the angels of light to worship him. All the employment and service of his church below is, to honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. And all the work of the church above is also to honor Christ: the song of angels, as well as of the redeemed from among men, is addressed to him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb that was slain, for ever and ever.

Reader! how shall you and I honor him whom the Father delighteth to honor? There is but one way. Oh! for grace to follow it. I would pray for faith to honor Jesus as the Father honors him. And while Jehovah commits all his glory to Jesus, so would I commit all my salvation: I would honor Jesus as the Sent of God; the Sealed of God, the Anointed of God, the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth. Yes! blessed Jesus! I would desire so to honor thee, as everlastingly to love thee, to live to thee, to be no longer my own, but as thine by purchase, by the sovereignty of thy grace upon my heart, and as the gift of the Father to thee; for the blessed purposes of my salvation. Blessed be God for all providences, all promises, all mercies, all dispensations; but above all, blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

CHAP. VII.

CONTENTS.

Here we have in this chapter the final ruin of Haman. Esther, at the banquet, presents her petition; prays for her life, and the life of her people: accuses Haman of his villany. The king orders his execution.

SO the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.

2 And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted

thee; and what *is* thy request? and it shall be performed, *even* to the half of the kingdom.

It should seem that the king was as anxious to know and to answer Esther's request, as she was to present it. He again repeats what he had twice said before, that to the half of his kingdom, let her request be what it might, it should be granted. Here, Reader! pause and consider, that if this poor heathen was so jealous of his honor to fulfil his word, what must thy God be to fulfil his promises? He that graciously proclaims himself as the faithful God. Deut. vii. 9. Oh! for faith to give the Lord the honour due unto his name!

3 Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:

4 For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage.

Is not this petition of Esther, spiritually considered, very suitable for the petition of every poor sinner before a gracious God in Christ? Are we not sold? have we not indeed sold ourselves by sin, by iniquity, and transgression? And had our slavery been for God's glory, how could we have stood up for deliverance from it. But when it is for the triumph of Satan; oh! surely Jesus will rescue us from the wrath to come, and take us from the power of the enemy.

5 Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?

No doubt the king must have been greatly surprized at the nature of this request. But, Reader! our petitions are all known, and all answered before they are delivered. He that hears prayer, is the Awakener of prayer, as well as *the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

6 And Esther said, The adversary and enemy *is* this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.

How delightful was this honest boldness. *The righteous are bold as a lion.* Think of Haman's terrors: his own conscience accused him: he needed no other. Alas! what an awful day will that be to the sinner, when standing before the judgment-seat of Christ. Oh! for grace now in the day of grace *to flee from the wrath to come!*

7 ¶ And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath *went* into the palace garden:

and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king.

8 Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther *was*. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

What passed in the king's mind is not known; but it should seem that he returned with more anger, and the situation of Haman, fallen down before Esther in a way of supplication, tended but to inflame his passion the more. All was graciously arranged by the providence of the Lord, to hasten on the ruin of Haman. Behold, Reader! how wisely and securely the Lord orders all things for the accomplishment of the sacred purposes of his will.

9 And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon.

10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

It is not the smallest evidence of the general worthlessness of Haman's character, that this *Harbonah* was so ready to suggest to the king the gallows Haman had erected to hang Mordecai upon. Thus he fell into his own snare. And the very method he had taken for the destruction of a man who had never injured him, proved his own death. Pause, and contemplate the sure end of the ungodly. And what a display is made of the Lord's providential superintendence through all. *So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord. But let them that love thee be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.*

REFLECTIONS.

READER! do not let the history of this wretched man Haman pass away from thy mind, without leaving the suitable reflections the review of such an awful character ought to occasion. What our blessed Lord said of some in his days seems applicable to some in all the days of the Church; *Ye are (said Jesus to them) of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from*

the beginning. And what a resemblance doth the character of Haman bear to such a stock? His hatred to poor Mordecai, stirred up by the evil spirit, disdained to shew itself against an individual only; the whole race shall die. Inflamed by power, by pride, and a troop of evil passions, he prosecutes his implacable malice, and to the attainment of this one object he would sacrifice every other. Pause, Reader, as you contemplate the man. Recollect that the same depravity is every man's by nature; and, but for grace, the evil which one man feels disposed to do, all would feel disposed to do. Nothing makes the difference, but the sovereign, free, restraining, preventing, and renewing grace of God in Jesus. Oh! for a thorough sense of this upon the heart! Oh! for a more awakened knowledge of our infinite and eternal mercies in Jesus. Oh! for ever blessed, blessed be God for Jesus Christ.

One word more before we quit this chapter. See, Reader, in Esther's suit obtained, after all the difficulties which seemed to lay in the way, that the cause of God's people can never be overlooked, nor forgotten. Hence, then, let us gather a renewed evidence that in Jesus and his great salvation are everlastingly secured to his people all the blessings contained in redemption. Trials, and difficulties, and seemingly impossibilities of deliverance, may, and must indeed, beset the people of Jesus in their way: but never forget this; Jesus is everlastingly pursuing one invariable plan of happiness concerning them. Oh! for grace to love Je-us, and to know Jesus as a friend, even when in his providences he seems to frown as though he was an enemy. Oh! for grace to lean upon one arm, when with the other he is correcting; to cleave to him, when we cannot take comfort from the darkness of his ways towards us. By and by (the soul saith) he will appear to my joy: I shall behold his face in righteousness. I know that all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth. Things are now dark; but the morning will come. Oh! for grace, then, to wait the Lord's time, and to be convinced that all things must and do work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose.

CHAP. VIII.

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We have in this chapter, what might have been expected, as a sequel to the former; Haman's whole house involved in his ruin: Mordecai advanced: and the Jews delivered from the ruin which had been long hanging over them.

ON that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he *was* unto her.

2 And the king took off his ring which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

Reader! the history before us will lose much of the beauty of it unless we see how far, and in what sense, it teacheth us. And doth it not sweetly teach that transition from mourning to joy, which the afflicted people of God are sometimes suddenly made to experience? Doth it not, moreover, shew us how short-lived the triumphs of the wicked over God's people are? And yet more: Are we not led to contemplate, from the advancement of Mordecai, how gracious the Lord deals by his people, when they who sow in tears are caused to reap in joy? But after all these, and the like improvements, what a faint shadow is the resemblance of what is here related, to the riches and honors Jesus bestows upon his people, when, from leading them to see their misery in themselves, they are made to inherit substance in him, and when he fills all their treasures. Prov. viii. 21.

3 And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews.

I admire the character of Esther in this particular most eminently, in that she forgot not the state of her brethren in affliction. Haman's proclamation for the destruction of the Jews in all the provinces, signed by the king, and sent forth throughout the empire, was still in force, and the poor captives, no doubt, lay trembling in the expectation of the day. Esther therefore allowed not herself to enter upon the fruit of her services, for her own personal comfort, until she saw them provided for also. I cannot but greatly admire this conduct in Esther: but while I admire Esther in this, how can I overlook thee, thou blessed Jesus, who, when thou hadst vanquished death, hell, and the grave, and returned to glory, remittedst not thine attention one moment to the concerns of thy people below. And do I not know, thou dear Lord, that such is thine unequalled love to thy redeemed, that never will thy triumphs be complete, till thou hast brought them all around thee in glory, that *where thou art, there they may be also*.

4 Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king,

It is delightful to see how the Lord directed the mind of the king. But oh! what is it to the tenderness of our glorious King, who everlastingly holds forth the sceptre of his grace to all his petitioners!

5 And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing *seem* right before the king, and I *be* pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which *are* in all the king's provinces:

6 For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people ; or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred ?

7 ¶ Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews.

8 Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal *it* with the king's ring : for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.

Though, by the very foolish law of the Medes and Persians, the king having once issued a decree, could not reverse it, yet he consented to do that which was nearly to the same purpose ; what they desired concerning the salvation of the Jews. Reader ! while we lament the pride and ignorance of man, who is every day liable to err, that any of his decrees should be irreversible, we cannot sufficiently admire and adore that glorious perfection of our covenant God, whose purposes in Jesus are like himself, unchangeable. Oh ! the confidence the Lord's people find in this !

9 Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that *is*, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth *day* thereof ; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies, and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language.

10 And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus's name, and sealed *it* with the king's ring, and sent letters by post on horseback, *and* riders on mules, camels, *and* young dromedaries :

11 Wherein the king granted the Jews which *were* in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and

to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, *both* little ones and women, and *to take* the spoil of them for a prey.

12 Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, *namely*, upon the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which *is* the month Adar.

13 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province *was* published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

14 *So* the posts that rode upon mules *and* camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace.

If the Reader be curious to calculate, he will find, I believe, that this new proclamation was made about nine months before the fatal day that Haman had appointed for the destruction of the Jews was to take place. So that it was little short of two months from Mordecai's bitter cry, to this time of reversing it. So long the Lord sometimes suffers his dear children to be exercised, even when all the while he hath determined upon their deliverance. Oh! for grace ever to keep such things in remembrance. Could Mordecai, and the people of the Jews, had they been commanded to have chosen their own mercies, have desired greater than the destruction of their sworn foe, and the being enriched with his spoils? Think of this then, ye people of God, under all your difficulties. Very shortly *God will bruise Satan under your feet*; and that song shall be sung in full chorus in glory: *Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.* Rev. xii. 10.

15 ¶ And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.

No doubt Mordecai was humble under all this splendor, and rejoiced more in the people's salvation, than in his own purple. Think, Reader! of thy Jesus, who passed through the streets of Jerusalem, agreeably to the Prophet's account of him ages before, meek and lowly: Zech. ix. 9. with Matt. xxi. 5—9. Behold him in his purple before Pilate, when he stood as thy Surety! John xix. 5. Look at him with an eye of faith, as John saw him, *in a vesture dipped in blood.* Rev. xix. 13.

16 The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour.

17 And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews: for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

We can easily conceive the joy of the Jews. But what I more particularly desire to remark, is, the conversion of many of the people of the land to their religion. Must not the Lord have graciously overruled this wonderful transaction in the court of Persia, which, no doubt, was in every one's mouth to his glory. And was it not a type, of the after call and conversion of the Gentile to the Jewish church? Isaiah. xlix. 6.

REFLECTIONS.

OF all the sweet reflections which arise out of this chapter, (and many and interesting they are), I desire chiefly to have my soul directed to the contemplation of Jesus, in his love to this people which the anxiety of Esther, for her countrymen the Jews, so strongly prompts the mind to consider. If she felt such concern as to cry out, 'How can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people; or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?' Think, Reader, whether it be possible to conceive Jesus will look on, and suffer any of his to perish? Recollect the interest he hath in them, the relationship in which he stands towards them; the purchase he hath made of them; the vast price they cost him; the love he hath to his Father who gave them to him; and the pains he hath gone through, to make their salvation sure? And can you suppose it possible, that he will suffer one of those little ones, which trust in him, to perish? Consider what he is in himself: His glory, greatness, almightiness, and sovereignty, as God and man in one person. Consider what he is in his alliance with his people: There is not a relationship in nature but Jesus fills. He is our everlasting Father. *As one whom his Father comforteth*, (he saith himself) *so will I comfort you*. He is the husband of his church, the brother, the friend. In short, under the tenderest and most endearing characters, he condescends to represent himself, as if by way of confirming his love, which is stronger than death and more vehement in its warmth than coals of fire. And consider what Jesus hath done to satisfy their souls, in the assurance of his unalterable love. He assumed the very nature of man, to convince man by such a palpable evidence of it, how his heart was towards his people. And having stood up as our surety, borne our sins, carried our sorrows, and though knowing no sin in himself, yet being made sin, and even a curse for us, and having satisfied the divine justice, answered the whole law, taken the punishment, finished transgression, made an end of sin, brought in an everlasting righteousness, washed poor sinners in his blood, clothed them in his righteousness, he now ever liveth to see the whole purposes of his salvation,

fully accomplished: can He endure to see any evil upon his people; or those for whom he died brought into everlasting ruin? Can Jesus look on and behold the destruction of his kindred? Reader! think of this and cast thy soul upon him who careth for thee? Oh! precious Jesus! I would say, cause me to rest with full assurance of faith, and to triumph in thee and thy great salvation!

CHAP. IX.

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We have in this chapter the sequel of the whole history. The day long appointed for the destruction of the Jews being arrived, and the Jews having obtained a new grant, to stand up for their lives, defend themselves and are victorious. Mordecai appoints an annual commemoration of this mercy.

NOW in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;)

2 The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people.

3 And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them.

4 For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater.

5 Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them.

6 And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men.

7 And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha,

8 And Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha,

9 And Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha,

10 The ten sons of Haman the son of Hamadatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand.

If we look at this history simply as such, though it certainly forms a very interesting one, yet we shall not gather the great and leading design, which we may reasonably suppose the Holy Ghost graciously intended from it, in causing it to form a part in the sacred canon of scripture. I would therefore desire the Reader to look further into it, and amidst several points of view in a way of providence, which are highly worthy our regard, I think we may with safety conclude also, that it was evidently designed in a spiritual sense to shew us the watchful care, that the Lord hath over his Church in all periods. Seen in this view, how decisive is it to contemplate the sure ruin of all the Church's enemies; and the sure prosperity of herself amidst all opposition. *Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with them; woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him.* Isaiah iii. 10. We see here the whole house of Haman destroyed. But amidst all, the Jews touch nothing of the spoil. Sweet feature in the character of God's people. *Touch not the unclean thing, lest ye be like to it.*

11 On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king.

12 And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? now what *is* thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what *is* thy request further? and it shall be done.

13 Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which *are* in Shushan to do to morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows

14 And the king commanded it so to be done:

and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons.

15 For the Jews that *were* in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan; but on the prey they laid not their hand.

16 But the other Jews that *were* in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, but they laid not their hands on the prey.

When we behold this great slaughter, and trace it back to the first cause; how wonderful are the ways of God. But add to this consideration, if we call to mind the Lord's declaration concerning the everlasting war, the Lord had said he would have with Amalek: no doubt this was one hour, if not the full decisive time, when the name of Amalek was to perish from under heaven. And is not the Church now looking forward to that glorious hour, when all the enemies of Jesus shall be destroyed.

17 On the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

18 But the Jews that *were* at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth *day* thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth *day* of the same they rested, and made a day of feasting and gladness.

19 Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar *a day of gladness and feasting*, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.

I should be inclined to hope and trust, that this was a religious festival, blessing God for so great, so unexpected, and so wonderful a deliverance. Oh! how great, unexpected, and wonderful is the deliverance to a poor sinner, just ready to perish; when the soul is made to hear the voice; *Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom.* Job xxxiii. 24.

20 ¶ And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that *were* in all the

provinces of the king Ahasuerus, *both* nigh and far,

21 To stablish *this* among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly,

22 As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.

23 And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them.

24 Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that *is*, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them;

25 But when *Esther* came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

26 Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. Therefore for all the words of this letter, and *of that* which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them,

27 The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their *appointed* time every year.

28 And *that* these days *should be* remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and *that* these

days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed.

29 Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim.

30 And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, *with* words of peace and truth,

31 To confirm these days of Purim in their times *appointed*, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their seed, the matters of the fastings and their cry.

32 And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book.

The appointment of an annual festival, to treasure up in the minds of the people, and to hand down to posterity, the signal deliverance the Lord had wrought for his people, forms a beautiful close to this interesting history. And the manner in which it was to be observed, in praises and acknowledgments to the Lord and liberality to men, serves to shew the graciousness of the design. When our prayers, and our alms come up for a memorial before God; these are suitable things to blend together. The Jews of the present hour keep in remembrance this festival. But alas! how can they observe any deliverance with suitable acknowledgments, when ignorant of the great Deliverer; and unconscious that all offerings, to make them acceptable, can only be presented in and by him.

REFLECTIONS.

My soul! while proclamations are made and religiously observed, for the annual celebration of deliverances; do thou get away to the mountain of holiness, in the gospel Church of Jesus, and daily celebrate that great deliverance from the wrath to come, which the Son of God by his glorious undertaking and accomplishment, wrought out for poor sinners, who are brought to believe in his name. Here is an everlasting festival indeed, opened to thy unceasing contemplation and thy joy. And here it is that we find *the kingdom of God not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*. Here then, my soul, seek grace from God, to celebrate in a constant jubilee, thy deliverance from the curse of God's law, the alarms of thine own conscience,

the terrors of a guilty mind, with all the just apprehensions of the wrath to come. Blessed be God! the king's decree hath been published and sent through all the provinces: Jesus gives grace, mercy, and peace. *And God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* And God the Holy Ghost confirms the glorious truth, in giving poor sinners grace *to believe the record which God hath given of his Son.* Lord! cause my soul to receive the truth in the love of it: and oh! grant that I may by faith live in the daily enjoyment of it; and at length arrive to the everlasting celebration of it in the realms above, where Jesus will be eternally adored, and praises of redemption be unceasingly offered to *God and the Lamb.*

CHAP. X.

CONTENTS.

This very short chapter, being unconnected with the history of the church, seems to have been inserted here only to record the advancement of Mordecai, and the happy state of God's people under his favor.

AND the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea.

2 And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?

The greatness and power of this Persian prince would not, I venture to believe, have been noticed in the scripture, had it not been from the situation of the church of God connected with it. The Bible is only careful to carry on the thread of history, respecting the several kingdoms of the world, as they succeeded each other, by way of shewing how they ministered to the introduction of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Daniel was commissioned to tell the king of Babylon, that *the God of heaven, in the days of these kings, would set up a kingdom which should never be destroyed.* Therefore the Reader of the sacred scriptures is led by the hand to observe just so far, and no further, as might enable him to trace the divine footsteps marking the way through these temporary kingdoms, in which the Lord setteth down one, and putteth up another; all ministering, though they thought not so, neither did they intend it, to the bringing in that kingdom of our Lord Jesus, *which shall stand for ever.* Hence, the *Persian* succeeded to the *Babylonian*; and the *Roman* (which about this time began to make a little appearance in the world) was to succeed the *Persian*; in the most peaceable and flourishing part of which, Christ was to come. Dan. ii. 44.

3 ¶ For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking

the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.

What a delightful character is given of Mordecai! Accepted of his brethren; seeking their happiness, and speaking peace to all his seed. Think, Reader! what a blessing such a man must have been in his days.

But oh! forget not to look to One infinitely higher, infinitely greater, infinitely surpassing every other, both in love, and grace, and mercy. Thou, O blessed Jesus, art the happiness of all creation, and of thy church, in a most peculiarly sweet way: accepted indeed of all thy brethren, for their happiness thou seekest, and thou not only speakest peace to all thy seed, but thou thyself art our peace, and our portion for ever. Micah. v. 5.

FAREWELL Mordecai! blessed be a faithful God in covenant for his faithfulness to thee and his people. Sharp were thy exercises, and deep the waters of tribulation, which broke in upon thee; when under the pressure, a loud and bitter cry issued from thy very soul. But oh! how hath the Lord brought thee out, and led thee through fire and water, until he hath brought thee into a wealthy place. See, my soul, and in the view always take confidence in the contemplation, how certain the issue is in all the appointments of the Lord. Not one thing hath failed, neither can ever fail, of God's covenant engagements to his people; but all are come to pass as it is this day. And shall not all the promises in Christ Jesus be sure to all his seed? Did Mordecai utter a loud and bitter cry in the midst of the city, while in the very moment the Lord was bringing about all the gracious purposes that followed: and shall my soul forget the unequalled cry of Jesus in the garden, when in an agony the sweat of his sacred body was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground! Was the Son of God thus afflicted, and his soul exceedingly troubled, in the very moment when, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, he was to be taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain, that by his stripes we might be healed, and by his death our souls live for ever: and shall my heart despond, or doubt the efficacy of his blood, and the security of his righteousness? Oh! Lord, henceforth give me more firmness, more assurance of faith, that I may behold thee in those sacred seasons accomplishing redemption, sure to all thy seed. Thou must see the travail of thy soul. The solemn word, the solemn oath is gone forth; *Men shall be blessed in thee; all nations shall call thee blessed.* Hail! holy, blessed, almighty Jesus! In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. To thee do I come, and in thy salvation make my boast. Thou art the Lord my righteousness, the hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof. Amen.